

Message Text

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ACTION L-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

SS-15 NSC-05 SCA-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-05 NSAE-00

PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 JUSE-00 SEC-01 /041 W

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O R 042230Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8739

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

D

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAN JOSE 4594

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, CS

SUBJECT: VESCO CONTROVERSY AT FEVER PITCH

REF: SAN JOSE 4560

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN PRO-
AND ANTI-VESCO FORCES REACHED A HIGH POINT ON DECEMBER 4
WITH AN ANTI-VESCO DEMONSTRATION AT NOON AND AN UPCOMING
7 P.M. ALOH NETWORK RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCAST TO THE
NATION BY VESCO. BOTH SIDES HAVE, IN THE PAST FEW DAYS,
VIGOROUSLY PUSHED THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS. IN THE
MEANTIME, IT APPEARS THAT THE EXTRADITION BILL IS A
DEAD ISSUE UNTIL MAY ALTHOUGH THERE MAY BE ASSEMBLY ACTION ON A
VESCO EXPULSION MOTION. AN ATTEMPT HAS BEEN MADE TO DISTRACT
ATTENTION FROM THE ANTI-VESCO MOVEMENT BY

ALLEGING THE CIA IS UNDERTAKING MASSIVE ACTIVITIES IN THE
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COUNTRY. IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT VESCO WILL BE EXPELLED.

ENDSUMMARY.

2. SINCE THE BROADCAST TO THE NATION ON NATIONAL TELEVISION ON NOVEMBER 26 IN WHICH A MANIFESTO WAS READ CALLING FOR VESCO'S EXPULSION FROM COSTA RICA, THE VESCO ANTAGONISTS TNE CONTINUED TO BEAT A DRUMFIRE RHYTHM MAINLY THROUGH THE MEDIA INTENDED TO SOLIDIFY PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST VESCO. CONTINUING FRONT-PAGE ARTICLES HAVE RUN IN BOTH "LA NACION" AND "LA REPUBLICA" DEEPENDED BY THEIR EDITORIALS, WHILE THE PAPERS ALSO PUBLISH TELEGRAMS FROM CONCERNED CITIZENS, AND SUPPORTIVE SIDEBAR ARTICLES ON THE SAME THEME. FIGUERES-ORIENTED AND VESCO-FINANCED "LA HORA" HAS COME VIGOROUSLY TO THE DEFENSE OF VESCO AS HAS, CURIOUSLY, THE HERETOFORE MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD AFTERNOON NEWSPAPER "LA PRENSA LIBRE." ON DECEMBER 3, A GROUP OF PROMINENT CITIZENS CALLED THE COSTA RICANS FOR DECENCY COMMITTEE WENT ON A NATIONWIDE TELEVISION AND RADIO HOOK-UP TO REPEAT ARGUMENTS AGAINST VESCO'S PRESENCE AND CALL FOR APOPULAR DEMONSTRATION IN THE CENTRAL SQUARE OF SAN JOSE AGAINST VESCO. THE PRO-DECENCY CITIZENS GROUP URGED ALL CONCERNED CITIZENS TO COME TO THE SQUARE AT NOON TO HEAR SPEECHES AGAINST VESCO AND SIGN THE MANIFESTO TO THE PRESIDENT. (SOME 300 PERSONS ASEMBLED IN THE RAINSWEPT SQUARE UNDER NUMEROUS COSTA RICAN FLAGS TO HEAR THE SPEECHES.)

3. IN RESPONSE TO THE MOUNTING PUBLIC CLAMOR FOR VESCO'S OUSTER, THE VESCO FORCES HAVE PUBLISHED IN "LA HORA" AND IN "LA PRENSA LIBRE", REPEATED IN ALL MAJOR PAPERS, ADS DEFENDING THE FUGITIVE FINANCIER. THE EMBASSY ESTIMATES THAT BETWEEN \$2,000 AND \$3,000- PER DAY ARE BEING SPENT FOR THESE FULL-PAGE SPREADS.

4. THE EXTENT OF POPULAR OPPOSITION TO VESCO WAS MADE CLEAR ON DECEMBER 3 WHEN A LARGE NUMBER OF UNIONS, STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS, TEACHERS ASSOCIATIONS, THE COSTA RICAN BAR ASSOCIATION, AND OTHERS PUBLISHED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE ANTI-VESCO MOVEMENT AND VESCO'S EXPULSION. THESE GROUPS, CONSTITUTING ALL THE MAJOR UNION

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FEDERATIONS AND TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS, COMPRISE A SURPRISINGLY LARGE PORTION OF THE COUNTRY'S PRESSURE GROUPS, MANY OF THEM LEFT OF CENTER.

5. ON DECEMBER3, VESCO'S SECRETARY CALLED THE MEDIA TO ANNOUNCE THAT VESCO WOULD HIMSELF GO ON A NATIONAL TELEVISION HOOK-UP AT 7 P.M. ON DECEMBER 4. THERE WAS NO INDICATION OF THE CONTENT OF VESCO'S MESSAGE,

BUT IT WILL BE TRANSLATED SIMULTANEOUSLY.
SOME LEADING JOURNALISTS HAVE SPECULATED THAT PERHAPS
VESCO WILL ANNOUNCE THAT HE WILL TEMPORARILY ABSENT
HIMSELF FROM COSTA RICA IN ORDER TO ALLOW THE HEAT TO
DIE DOWN. HOWEVER, HIGHLY RELIABLE SOURCE
CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT BECAUSE
OF VESCO'S \$40- MILLION ECONOMIC INVESTMENT IN AN ARRAY
OF COSTA RICAN BUSINESSES--NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS
FEGUERES'--PRESIDENT ODUBER WOULD NOT EXPEL VESCO FROM
THE COUNTRY.

6. IN THE MEANTIME, THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, WHICH HAS
GIVEN INTERMITTENT INDICATIONS THAT IT WOULD
DEBATE EITHER THE EXTRADITION BILL OR THE PRD EXPULSION MOTION,
APPROVED THE NATIONAL BUDGET AND WENT OUT OF ORDINARY
SESSION WITH NO ACTION ON EITHER OF THE FORMER EXCEPT
FOR A SHORT, STERILE DEBATE, SANDWICHED IN BETWEEN

BUDGET MATTERS, ON THE EXPULSION MOTION. THE ASSEMBLY
WAS CONVENED ON DECEMBER 2 FOR ITS EXTRAORDINARY
SESSION, BUT FOR LACK OF A QUORUM HAS NOT UNDERTAKEN ANY
BUSINESS. ONLY THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE BILL IS CURRENTLY ON THE
EXECUTIVE'S AGENDA FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION DEBATE.
OF COURSE, THE EXECUTIVE CAN AT ANY TIME INSERT AGENDA
ITEMS AND THE POSSIBILITY REMAINS THAT THE EXTRADITION
BILL MAY RECEIVE ATTENTION. THE EMBASSY, HOWEVER, HAS
GROWING DOUBTS ABOUT THE EXECUTIVE'S WILLINGNESS TO
MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION, DESPITE PLN ASSEMBLY INTEREST IN
SUCH A DEBATE, DURING THE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION. THUS,
THE "VESCO LAW" WILL PROBABLY REMAIN AS THE LAW OF THE LAND
UNTIL AT LEAST MAY 1, 1975, WHEN THE LEGISLATURE
RESUMES ORDINARY SESSIONS. THERE IS, HOWEVER,
CONSIDERABLE OPPOSITION INTEREST AND SOME PLN INTEREST
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IN DISCUSSING THE EXPULSION MOTION DURING THE EXTRAORDINARY
SESSION. (MOTIONS CAN BE DEBATED IN EXTRAORDINARY WHILE
BILLS CANNOT UNLESS PROPOSED BY THE EXECUTIVE.)

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INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-05 NSAE-00 PA-01

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 JUSE-00 SEC-01 SCA-01 /041 W

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INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

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7. IN A MANEUVER CLEARLY IHMQENDED TO DILUTE THE FERVOR OF THE ANTI-VESCO MOVEMENT BY DISENCHANTING THE MANY LEFT-WING GROUPS OPPOSED TO VESCO THROUGH ASSOCIATING THEM ON THE SIDE OF THE CIA AND THE USG, "LA HORA" ON DECEMBER 4, IN A FRONT-PAGE STORY, ANNOUNCED THAT "THE CIA IS INVADING US." THE CHARGE IN A PRESS RELEASE DECEMBER 4 HAS CATEGORIZED THE "LA HORA" STROY AS BASELESS AND NOT WORTHY OF FURTHER EMBASSY COMMENT "SEE SDRTEL).

8. COMMENT: IN THE EVENT VESCO ANNOUNCES, AS THE EMBASSY EXPECTS HE WILL, THAT HE DOES NOT INTEND TO LEAVE COSTA RICA, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN TO WHAT EXTENT THE ANTI-VESCO MOVEMENT CAN MAINTAIN ITS MOMENTUM. MANY OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN DURING THE UPCOMING CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS AND DURING THE NORMAL JANUARY VACATION PERIOD THE REST OF THE STEAM WILL EVAPORATE. THERE IS NO LONGER ANY DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT THE EMBASSY'S ESTIMATE NEARLY TWO YEARS AGO THAT VESCO'S FINANCIAL AND, FOLLOWING FROM THAT, POLITICAL
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ENTRENCHMENT IN COSTA RICA IS PROFOUND.

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Message Attributes

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